

**Opening:**

This is Academically Speaking, a podcast hosted by Dr. Theodora Regina Berry, Vice Provost and Dean of UCF's College of Undergraduate Studies. It features inspirational stories from the college's faculty, students, and alumni about the transformational power of education.

**Dr. Theodora Regina Berry:**

Hello everyone and welcome to Academically speaking. I am Dr. Theodora Berry, Vice Provost and Dean for the College of Undergraduate Studies here at the University of Central Florida. And with me today is Chloe Gordon.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Hi.

**Dr. Theodora Regina Berry:**

So excited.

**Chloe Gordon:**

I'm so excited to be here. It's such an honor.

**Dr. Theodora Regina Berry:**

So let me tell everyone a little bit about Chloe. Chloe is a member of the class of 2024, and she graduated with a Bachelor of General Studies here in the College of Undergraduate Studies. She is the program's 2000th graduate, and we are so excited. Chloe is an E-RYT yoga teacher who leads retreats worldwide.

**Chloe Gordon:**

That's right.

**Dr. Theodora Regina Berry:**

As part of her degree program, Chloe participated in a Service Learning Project with Yoga for Cause. We're going to talk a little bit about that. The project led to her work with the Department of Orange County Corrections. Even though the course is complete, Chloe continues to work with the organization. Chloe believes that everyone has potential. In her LinkedIn bio, she writes, "It is not about what others say or think. Discovering new ways to tap into your potential and experience life to the fullest without anything but you." Welcome Chloe.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, thank you. Thank you for having me. I'm so honored to this be part of the UCF. A proud Knight.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Absolutely. And to be the 2000th graduate of our General Studies program, we are so excited, and we have so much to talk about.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, I do. I love it. I'm actually sad that time is coming to an end that I'm going to be graduating. I'm going to miss being a student of UCF. It has been a wonderful journey.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Well, I'm so thrilled to be able to offer you and others like you an opportunity to acquire your degree and pursue your dreams.

**Chloe Gordon:**

That's right.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

So first question, why Integrative General Studies? Why did you choose that program?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Because there were so many courses that I wanted to take in different areas of study that my advisor suggested that General Studies would be the degree to go with, Integrative General Studies. And it has been wonderful from my first few courses I took in 2021 fall to now, I have thoroughly enjoyed all of them from my religious studies to my IDS courses. It's just been thrilling. I can't believe time has flown and I can't believe I'm the 2000th graduate.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Well, it's one of the beauties of our general studies program, is that it allows people to really investigate all of the things that they are curious about, to build on their intellectual capacity, to really examine and explore, and to dig a little deeper sometimes in moments where you're like, "I want to know more about this."

**Chloe Gordon:**

Exactly. And that's exactly what I did. I wanted to know more about Hinduism, Buddhism, and my Service Learning Project led me to Yoga for Change that I continue to work with them, and it's really put me on the path, and I feel that I'm so grateful for UCF for offering these different courses, Philosophy of Religion and different psychology courses that I was able to take over the time. And they've all went together in the end. They all brought different ideas and aspects to my learning that they all just went together. They worked together.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

And it really speaks to the interdisciplinary mission of our college so that people can see that you can have a general idea, but there could be multiple perspectives to examining that one idea.

**Chloe Gordon:**

And coming up with a solution or a thought, or an idea.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Yes.

**Chloe Gordon:**

And understanding greater about, for example, studying Hinduism. I'm a yoga teacher, but really understanding the philosophy behind the culture and how the different parts of not only the yoga practice, but of the gods and goddesses, and just the rituals that they have, and even learning about Muhammad, all these different things that I just think, "Wow, I'm so grateful that I was able to spend the 16 weeks for a semester," just really diving in and doing it online, which I'm so grateful, has really ... I don't know what else to do with my time because I've devoted 20 hours a week to studying and diving into my coursework, and it's been so rewarding. I am going to miss it when it's over. I want to continue on here at UCF, I believe.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Well, we would love to have you continue on here at UCF. Absolutely. You could be a two-time Knight, or even a three-time Knight.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Yes, I would love that. Absolutely. Yes.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

You mentioned about your service learning experience. Tell us a little bit more about what you did, and why you selected yoga for a cause to work with.

**Chloe Gordon:**

The reason why I selected the Yoga for Change, well, it was about volunteering and spending time. And another teacher at my yoga studio told me that she volunteered at Yoga for Change. And I thought I asked if that was possible for me to do that with my professor. And she said yes in the end. And I started and I worked at different trauma facilities. We help veterans with dealing with positive coping mechanisms. And I continued on, in fact, when I come back this summer, I'm actually going to take on a leadership role with Yoga for Change. I didn't want to stop because it is so rewarding because I'm able to give back to my community and give back to those that are struggling, that have nowhere else to turn, to realize that they have this one beautiful life. To be in the moment and to learn to one step helps you to lead on the future.

And that's what the Yoga for Change and being able to go into the local jail and teach just gentle movement about just reconnecting with themselves. And also from my psychology course, understanding more about how trauma affects people and just continuing my Service Learning Project, I feel like I'm never going to stop. In fact, it makes me want to pursue my Master's in social work, to help those who think that there's no other outlet to realize that you can come back 25 years later and finish your degree, or even start taking just one class at a time and devoting just a couple of hours of just reading and setting up. I think I tell my children if I had put the time that I did when I was younger, I could be a Doctor right now because it's so amazing I think to learn. And the professors have been so helpful and encouraging, and the support system through UCF from day one when I decided to come back, they were there to tell me that when I graduate they're going to be cheering me on.

So I didn't want to let them down. I didn't want to let myself down. I wanted to give it my all. And I say a little prayer all the time. They put me on the path of where I need to go. And I feel like that's how it was with picking my courses and using the different disciplines to come up with solutions and finding the Yoga for Change and realizing that I want to help, again, those in my community that don't have the tools or know where to go, and I'm just leading them on the path.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

So how do you think this work has helped you to contribute to the community?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Well, because of the Service Learning Project, if I had not come back to school, I probably wouldn't have done it. I knew about that you could volunteer as a yoga teacher for Yoga for Change. I don't want to say that it forced me to, but in a way, having that course saying you have to figure out a Service Learning Project. And I thought, "You know what? I feel like is the Service Learning Project I want to do is Yoga for Change." And once it was done, I didn't want to stop because I saw, every time I show up to class, the effect after the class and through the yoga class of just how people were just able to just be at peace even for that moment, and just realize we think, I think, too far ahead and we just have to do stuff in that moment, what we could do as best as we can to get us to the next step.

And I think that's what my Service Learning Project did. It shifted me to connect to people that I never would've connect with because they weren't in my circle. And so going to the trauma centers and going with the veterans or the juvenile youths that suffered abuse with their parents, and seeing how they were behaving and knowing that they just didn't have the right tools or somebody to just be there, just to hold space for them. Just to know that they can just be themselves, and be silly, and make funny yoga breath faces, and it'll be okay. It's okay to let go of your ego and find yourself, and find a way out when you think that the only way to turn is through substance abuse or things that are leading them on the path of destruction. Giving them, even if it's just an hour a week, knowing that they have that support.

And like I said, I would never have ever volunteered for Yoga for Change had it not been my coursework at UCF. And like I said, actually from that, I've brought on three other yoga teachers.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Oh, wonderful.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Yeah, and they've actually made a big impact. They themselves have. And I think it was all because of, for me, from one person starting it to then spreading the word about how much it has changed. So really without my Service Learning Project, without UCF, I wouldn't be here, and the other three teachers wouldn't be there that I had suggested.

So it's come full circle, we're just-

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

It's positive growth.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Absolutely. Yes. And like I said, all my professors have been so encouraging, even though we haven't met personally, I feel like I know them just from our one-on-one Zoom calls or messaging, and UCF makes it really easy for online courses. So it's just been fantastic.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

If you could take out your proverbial crystal ball and see into the future, and imagine a future for yourself, where do you see yourself five, ten years down the road? What would you like to be doing?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Well, I definitely would like to come back and get my Master's degree, for sure, a hundred percent. I've actually been already looking into that. And I believe in social work and working in the corrections, and being an advocate, again, for those that don't have any other support, knowing that there is somebody out there that does care, that knows that you...one step just better yourself. Whether you take one moment at a time, maybe even just enrolling, being a support person for others. I see myself still working for Yoga for Change and teaching yoga, and continuing my travels with yoga retreats, and still working in the community here in Orlando. I don't think I'm going to leave Orlando anytime soon. So in fact, I'm trying to get my middle son to come transfer to UCF, as well. So yes, we'll have a whole family of Knights here.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Oh, that would be fun.

**Chloe Gordon:**

But in five years, I definitely feel like I want to have accomplished my Master's degree, and who knows, maybe even a doctorate. You never know. Sky sky's the limit. Inspired by you.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

That would wonderful.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Yes.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Absolutely. Okay, so it's clear that you envision yourself as a lifelong learner, as someone who will always be aspiring to know more and do more.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, yes.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

So, given that particular perspective, what advice would you give to someone who's thinking about starting college or trying to complete their college degree?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Do it. Don't wait, go online right now. The support staff here, amazing. The advisors, amazing. Do it. Don't hesitate, sign up online, even if it's one course a semester, even if it takes you 10 years to do one class, it took me four years to do two classes a semester, but time flies. And here we are. It's already April, it feels like it was just January. Still, it's surreal to me that I'm graduating, and I remember being super scared about coming back and I thought, "What do I have to lose? Just go for it and see what happens." And I know, even I get nervous when I take exams, and even before the exam, I have to just take a deep breath and just calm down. I think, "You know what? I'm prepared and what I know will just show up. And if it doesn't, that's okay too," because I'm human. I'm not perfect, I'm not a robot. But just even challenging myself and when I make a mistake, I learned from it. It actually, when I make the mistake, the knowledge seems to stick more before I go back to figure out what the answer was and now it's like forever ingrained in my brain.

But I say don't hesitate, don't wait. And the college here at UCF, it makes it so easy to accomplish getting your degree, especially if it's hard for you if you have a job and children and family to come back. I think some people look too far ahead into the future, and I think it's just taking one step at a time. And so just going through every semester, there's over 600 courses to choose from. And that's why I love the Integrative General Studies, is that you can just pick anything, anything that you fancy, that you're interested in learning. And like I said, don't wait, just go for it. Because before you know it, 10 years will go by. You'll have your degree and, yeah, then what's the next step? And becoming a leader or somebody that can influence others to encourage them to take the steps to continue your education. Forever students. I love that. It's always learning.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

So if you had to use one word-

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh boy.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

... to describe your experience here at UCF, what would that word be?

**Chloe Gordon:**

It would be fulfilling. I feel fulfilled. I feel that everything that I wanted to know I did. In fact, I wouldn't change any of my courses. Some were harder than others, but every semester, no matter what course I took, I always found something new and interesting and something that broadened my horizons that I never even thought about, where I look back and I was like, "Oh, that makes sense now." So it just brought it all together. So I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with the way my education, my advisors, that helped me along the way to reach the goal of graduating now. Like I said, I'm very sad that it's over, but I can't wait to continue on.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Excellent. All right. So now we are about to venture into what I like to call the lightning round.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh boy.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

This is an opportunity for our viewers and our listeners to get to know you better on a bit more of a personal level.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Okay.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

I'm just going to ask some very simple questions and you answer with the first thing that comes to your mind. All right. What is your favorite color?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Blue.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Excellent. What is your favorite song?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, well, it's a chant. It's Om Maṇi Padme Hūṃ. I love that. So it's a chant. And Devi prayer as well. That's another one. But those are my favorite songs. Meditation music, I'm a yogi.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Okay. All right. What is your favorite book?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, *The Alchemist*. I read that, gosh, when it first came out. And it's basically a sum it up. It's everything you do, no matter what the job is, you do it to your absolute best. And the hero's journey is the life that we're on. And I believe that for everyone. And I think if you just took our time to just sit with it and just ask God, universe, whoever that you believe to put you on that path, I feel like it does happen. And *The Alchemist*? Yes, a hundred percent. Hands down. I feel like everybody that graduates should get a nice check, with the check they put it in the book, and they give the book to the person, and that should be leading you on the next path, for sure.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Okay. Favorite movie?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, boy. Well, I love, I have boys and I love the Star Wars trilogy. So yeah, I just watched *Return of the Jedi*.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

I'm a more Star Trek person myself.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, yeah. Star Trek, too. I used to watch that in the '80s with my father. Back in the day, with Captain Kirk.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

A new Season of *Star Trek: Discovery* just started so I am glued. All of my folks who work with me know I am a true Star Trek fan. And when Star Trek is on, do not call me.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Actually, for Halloween, 20 years ago, I dressed up as a Trekkie. I had the little ... Yes, everything.



**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

I'm a huge fan, so Star Wars, Star Trek, all that.

**Chloe Gordon:**

I love that. It's a big space. Indiana Jones is a favorite too, that I like. Old school movies.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Favorite place to travel?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, wow. I've been to quite a few places. I would have to say probably London, because my dad is English, and I used to go every summer with my family. And then as I got older, I would go alone and stay with my granny and granddad, and then I would use London as a hub and then travel to the different parts of the continent from there.

But I love London a) because I speak the language, and b) the culture, the history, and I think it's just a great hub if you go and just even stay in and then just jet set around Europe.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

You can almost get anywhere from London.

**Chloe Gordon:**

And it's super inexpensive too. You can take the train to Paris, the boat across to, yeah. So I would say London is one of my favorite cities too.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

I like London. And it's a culturally rich city. It's got so much history. It's easy to travel through and yeah, it's phenomenal. I'm not a monarchist. My grandparents were, but I'm not.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Right. No, I know. It's a whole other podcast with the Royals.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

...the palace and all and all that kind of stuff. But yeah, London's a great place to visit. Okay. Favorite thing to do on a rainy day?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, well, I do like to practice yoga, and I like to open up all my doors and windows and let the air breathe through, move through. If my sons are around, I like to sit around and

watch movies with them, that's when we'll start watching the Star Wars trilogies, or *Back to the Future*. I love that one too. I forgot about that. So probably just chilling at home, maybe making something delicious in the kitchen that I have, like a soup or something. And then just relaxing and hanging out with my children and watching some movies, or good television, Netflix series.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

That kind of changes for me based on location. So when I lived in California, I lived in the Bay Area. I was walking distance to probably about half a dozen different pho places and could a nice big bowl of pho and sit outside while it rained. And it was just wonderful.

**Chloe Gordon:**

I love that.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Here, I don't necessarily ... I like to read a book when it rains and it's kind of gloomy, but I don't have a thing that I do here yet, in large part because my timing wasn't so great, so I didn't really discover that thing, I am still looking for it. But when I lived in Georgia, I would go walking downtown in the downtown area in the rain, because it was always so quiet and there was a big park there. And the park had these trees that created this canopy, and so the rain wouldn't come through the trees until just about when it was finished raining. And then you could see the water just come through the trees at that point. So you could sit out there until right about when it was starting to slow down, it was like, "Okay, get out now, brother, because the water's coming." Every place for me had sort of a different ritual. The relationship to rain and rainy days. When I lived in Texas, we'd go to the flea market in the rain, because all the spaces in the flea market were covered, and few people would go in the rain. So you could just wander around and see all kinds of interesting things at the flea market.

**Chloe Gordon:**

That's a great idea, yeah. The flea market. All right. I could add a whole visual of that tree in Georgia that you're sitting under. Beautiful. Yes.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

So is there anything that I didn't ask that I should have asked?

**Chloe Gordon:**

Well, I can't think of anything off the top of my head right now. I feel like we hit all the questions. I'm just so honored that you allowed me to come and talk on this podcast. Thank you for having me, so much.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Well, I'm honored that you have chosen to spend time with us today, and really excited about having you as the 2000th graduate for our Integrative Studies Program.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Thank you. Wow, 2000.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Looking forward to seeing all of those folks who've been part of your support system through this particular journey. And thank you so much again for joining us.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Oh, thank you for having me.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

For sharing who you are and what you've experienced. We're super excited, and we wish you all the luck in the world for your future endeavors as you move forward. And hopefully we'll get to see you again as a second time Knight.

**Chloe Gordon:**

That's right. I'll love that when I'm completing my Master's degree. Absolutely.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

Absolutely.

**Chloe Gordon:**

Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

**Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:**

And thank you for joining us, and I want to thank our viewers and our listeners for joining us today. This is Dr. Theodora Regina Berry at Academically Speaking, and have a great day.